



DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

News Release

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DLNR CHAIR ANNOUNCES NEW STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION LEADERSHIP TEAM

HONOLULU -- The Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) today announced the appointment of a new leadership team for the State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD). Dr. Puaalaokalani Aiu will serve as administrator of the State Historic Preservation Division. She will be assisted by Nancy McMahon, a 20-year veteran of the department, who will serve as archaeology and historic preservation manager.

“The mission of the State Historic Preservation Division is both broad and important. Therefore, we believe a team approach would best provide the leadership and expertise needed to efficiently and effectively carry out the vital goal of protecting and enhancing our historic and cultural resources,” said Laura H. Thielen, chairman of the Department of Land and Natural Resources. “We are proud to have selected two remarkable women who have the combined abilities to help the State Historic Preservation Division to realize its full potential.”

Dr. Puaalaokalani Aiu previously worked as a senior analyst in the Office of Hawaiian Affairs where she developed community networks, worked with the Native Hawaiian Preservation council, the Island Burial Councils, and supervised reviews on multiple high level projects. Aiu is a graduate of Kamehameha Schools and Pomona College, and obtained her PhD in

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communications from the University of Massachusetts. Most recently she was a vice president of Communications Pacific in the company's community-building practice where she managed large and complex communications accounts often involving burial treatment, historic preservation and cultural sensitivities.

"Pua has a strong background and experience with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). She conducted cultural reviews of NHPA projects and has worked many years with Hawaiian communities statewide. In addition, she brings excellent communication and administrative skills which are essential for the Division's success," Thielen said. "I am impressed with her long-term desire to lead this program, and her recognition that it was time to step up and offer to be part of the solution."

Nancy McMahon has been an archeologist with the Historic Preservation Division for 20 years. She worked on O'ahu for almost 10 years, and then moved to Kaua'i to open a branch office where she was responsible for building and operating an island historic preservation program from the ground up. She has served on the Office of Hawaiian Affairs Historic Preservation Task Force, was the humanities scholar for the Hawai'i Committee on the Humanities and the Historic Preservation Quality Control Manager for the Kaho'olawe Cleanup Project. McMahon obtained her bachelor's, masters and completed coursework for a doctorate at the University of Hawai'i. She has served as acting administrator for the division since December 2007.

"Nancy's commitment to the Historic Preservation Division is outstanding," said Thielen. "She has dedicated her entire career to this mission, and she's clearly done an excellent job. I've received positive reports and accolades regarding her work on Kaua'i from environmentalists, landowners, small businesses, native Hawaiians and developers. Her technical experience with the State Historic Preservation Program will continue to provide essential guidance for our staff."

"We are in a very exciting time for the division, and I'm looking forward to working with Nancy and the rest of the division staff in meeting the challenges we face," said Aiu.

“This opportunity to bring meaningful change and stability to the division, whose mission is so important to the people of Hawai‘i, is significant,” said McMahon. “Twenty years ago I joined the State Historic Preservation Division with the dream to address some of the challenges the division faced. Now I will have the opportunity to work with Pua so we can turn this vision into a reality. I’m proud of the support I have received from the community and ask that everyone continue to endorse and support Pua and myself.”

Dr. Aiu was recommended for the position of administrator and Nancy McMahon for chief archeologist by the Search Committee established by Thielen in December 2007 when the prior Administrator stepped down. The Committee consisted of Dr. Kū Kahakalau, a founder of the cultural based public charter schools and member of the Big Island Burial Council; Judge (ret) Patrick Yim, trustee of the Queen Liliuokalani Trust; and Tim Johns, former DLNR chairman and current chief executive officer and president of Bishop Museum.

“The Search Committee’s ideal of the SHPD Division administrator is an individual who exhibits exceptional courage, character, competency, commitment and cultural grounding, which are all qualities essential for an effective leader and administrator for this Division,” said Judge Yim in the Committee report to Chairwoman Thielen.

Aiu will start on May 12. McMahon will continue to run the division until then.

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